



Australian Health Care
Reform Alliance
G/- PO Box 280 Deakin West ACT 2600 ABN 64 051 645 674
www.healthreform.org.au



Public Health Association
AUSTRALIA



MEDIA RELEASE 3 March 2015

NGOs welcome co-payment change but warn sting is still in tail

A grouping of key community, consumer and health groups have welcomed the scrapping of the Medicare co-payment by the Government and congratulate the new Minister Susan Ley on assisting the Government to see the value in doing so. However the freeze on GP Medicare rebates still carries a significant danger of forcing GPs to raise their fees as the bite continues over the coming years. This could have just as much impact on low income and ill Australians.

The group comprises the Public Health Association of Australia, Australian Health Care Reform Alliance and the Australian Council of Social Service.

“We welcome the removal of the co-payment because it shows the Government has recognised that there was no health rationale for deterring people from using GPs and other primary health care services. This is where some key preventive activities occur and where illness can be diagnosed early and care provided before it gets more serious. However the freeze on GP payments will force them to introduce co-payments over time, having the same effect. Our grouping of community, consumer and health groups calls on the Government to end this now, rather than in 2018,” said Tony McBride, Chair of the Australian Health Care Reform Alliance.

“Our grouping understands that there is some pressure to contain future spending and it recently met with the Minister to suggest a range of areas where efficiencies could be found instead of hitting consumers,” said Michael Moore, CEO of Public Health Association of Australia.

“Such measures include reducing hospital care at end of life when further (often expensive) treatment is futile and consumers don’t want it, reducing unnecessary prescription of medications, reducing over-use of radiology and pathology testing where evidence does not support its use, better negotiation of pharmaceutical prices by the PBS, and a range of others,” said Mr Moore.

“However we urge Minister Ley to develop a process of consultation and development to create a longer-term set of feasible and sustainable options for funding health care, especially primary health care, that is efficient, but also reflects Australians’ values and does not impinge on the people’s health,” said Mr McBride.

Contact:

Tony McBride (Chair, Australian Health Care Reform Alliance): 0407 531 468

Michael Moore (CEO, Public Health Association of Australia): 0417 249 731